

Federal Communication Commission

Docket Number 07-31

Commissioners,

As I wrote to my Senators, **WE ARE ALREADY PAYING FOR THE USE OF THE NETWORK** thru our ISP and phone companies, regardless of whether we use it for phone or the web. The telecoms want to charge an additional fee to the person(s), or companies that we connect to. That means they will control who gets on the web by selling to the highest bidder - the equivalent to charging a toll to use the Interstate highways, while making little businesses, like local farmers, and those on the lower economic scale use the state roads unless they can afford the tolls. Worse yet, they can censor what/who can get on the internet as in China and other dictatorships. (*see Telus article below*)

Edward Whiteacre, the CEO of SBC Comm. put it this way: **"Now what they would like to do is use my pipes free, but I ain't going to let them do that."**¹ Whiteacre's comment is bullshit (to quote Harry Truman). Is your internet connection free? If so, the rest of us would like to know your ISP. If, like the turnpike investors in the past, Whitehead wants to set up a separate, private toll system, let him build it, but the system that exists NOW is **not his**, it is a **public utility**, which he is granted permission to operate for the good of the people.

BTW, this has happened repeatedly in US history. If business had had its way, people in the country would not have electricity or telephone lines. Why string miles of wires for only a few customers? Government has had to force industries to service ALL peoples for the COMMON GOOD, or do it as a government enterprise. The REA in the '30s brought electricity to almost everyone regardless of the bottom line in a financial report..

Businesses built turnpikes to make money off of tolls. It was the Federal government under President Eisenhower, a former general, who, after WWII and seeing the military need for swift access to all parts of the country (unencumbered by private ownership), pushed the interstate highway system.

In Boston, the businessmen, even after the horrendous Chicago fire!, refused to increase the size of water pipes to the downtown business district, after business took over a huge residential area around Old North Church (much as the telecoms don't want to service poor neighborhoods now), because of the cost. When the Boston fire began, those venal businessmen's own skyscrapers were destroyed because of lack of water in the little residential

pipes. Then, rather than admitting their own avaricious stupidity, they tried to blame the Fire Chief, who, for years, had pleaded with the Water Board (the same businessmen who controlled Boston politics) to improve the infrastructure. I could go on and on with examples of capitalistic parsimony at the expense of the ordinary citizens.

One final point, Commissioners, the US lags many countries (we were 4th in 2001 and now 15th) in both numbers of subscribers on high-speed lines, and those connected to any line. Even those on high-speed connections here are much slower (as much as 100 times!) than in some other countries, because the telecom industries in those countries have been laying fiber optics like gangbusters. Also, it costs us a lot more in the US, while the telecoms make massive profits subsidized by FREE government granted privileges to use the airways. It is the telecoms own cream skimming that has caused the US to fall behind, because they have not been using the profits to lay fiber as they said they would.

The words to remember here, Commissioners, are **NET NEUTRALITY**. **UNIVERSAL, NON-DISCRIMINATORY ACCESS** is another way of saying it.

Thank you for listening,
Richard Fochtman, Leeds, Maine

¹http://www.democracyinaction.org/dia/track.jsp?key=106291999&url_num=32&url=http://www.businessweek.com/@n34h*IUQu7KtOwgA/magazine/content/05_45/b3958092.htm

Telus cuts subscriber access to pro-union site

A British Columbia telecom company in a labor dispute blocked all of its subscribers from a pro-union website:

[Telus cuts subscriber access to pro-union website](#)

Last Updated Sun, 24 Jul 2005 22:45:13 EDT CBC News

The B.C.-based communications company that's in a bitter fight with unionized employees has blocked its internet subscribers from accessing a website supporting striking union members. Telus subscribers can't get into Voices for Change, which says it's "a community website run by and for Telecommunications Workers Union (TWU) members." The site calls the company's move censorship, and TWU president Bruce Bell

questioned its legality. But the company said the site suggested striking workers jam Telus phone lines, and posted pictures of employees crossing the union picket lines. Telus spokesman Drew McArthur said advocating jamming lines hurt the company, and access to the pictures threatened the privacy and safety of employees. Bell said union members who post online exchanges about jamming Telus service lines are acting within their rights. People who use service providers other than Telus can still access the sites, and Telus subscribers can get in through a proxy site, <http://vfc.proxy.pfak.org/>, Voices for Change said.

This is a Canadian example, but it is yet another indication that network neutrality is an important issue for all progressive actors on the internet. We don't own the broadband networks that we rely on. A handful of powerful corporations do. **If the owners of broadband technology are allowed to discriminate based on the content of the data they carry, censorship will always be a threat.** It would be one thing if there were thousands of carriers competing for our patronage (or a publicly funded alternative), but there aren't.

--“As nightfall does not come at once, neither does oppression. In both instances there is twilight where everything remains seemingly unchanged, and it is in such twilight that we must be aware of the change in the air, however slight, lest we become unwitting victims of the darkness.” -Former Supreme Court Justice William O. Douglas